

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 14314 291951Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 DHA-05 MCT-01 OPR-02 /065 W  
-----102920 292004Z /72

R 291536Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8802  
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L 14314

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, EG, SHUM  
SUBJ: MUSLIM-COPTIC CONFLICT IN ASSUIT

REFCAIRO 14256,

1. ACCORDING ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MISSIONARY DALE BARNET (PRO-TECT) SITUATION IN ASSUIT REPORTED REFTEL HAS BEEN DEFUSED, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT.

2. CLASHES CITED REFTEL REPORTEDLY WERE GENERATED BY COINCIDENCE OF RAMADAN AND COPTIC CELEBRATION OF ASCENSION OF MARY. FOLLOWING SOME VIOLENCE GOV OF ASSIUT HAD ASKED COPTS TO REMOVE DECORATIONS ERECTED FOR THEIR FESTIVAL TO AVOID POSSIBILITY OF INTERCOMMUNAL TROUBLE DURING PERIOD OF MUSLIM FASTING. THIS WAS DONE BUT SOME MEMBERS OF COPTIC COMMUNITY RETALIATED BY PULLING DOWN MUSLIM DECORATION WHICH WERE ERECTED NEXT DAY IN CELEBRATION OF RAMADAN. BARNET HAD NOT HEARD OF INVOLVEMENT TAKFIR WA HEIGIR OR ANY DEATHS.

3. SITUATION AT ONE POINT BECAME SO TENSE THAT ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CONSIDERED PULLING OUT AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONNECTED WITH ASSIUT COPTIC OPHANAGE. HOWEVER, TENSIONS EASED AND,  
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ACCORDING OUR SOURCE SOME "HALF MILLION" COPTS PEACEFULLY ATTENDED ASSUIT RELIGIOUS CEREMONY DURING PAST WEEKEND.

4. INTER ALIA, BARNET REMARKED THAT ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ENCOUNTERING FEWER DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING PERMISSION CONSTRUCT CHURCHES SINCE SADAT ASSUMED POWER. REPORTEDLY, IT NOW TAKING ONLY ONE YEAR TO OBTAIN SUCH PERMISSION,

COMPARED TO THREE-FIVE YEARS UNDER NASSER. HE SAID FOUR ASS-  
EMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND PROM-  
ISED GIVE US LIST OF LOCATIONS.

5. COMMENT: ASSIUT AND TAKFIR INCIDENTS BRING TO SURFACE  
PREVAILING RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN EGYPT WHICH GOE MUST CONSTANTLY  
MONITOR. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AMB, SAYYID MAR'I  
REFERRED TO DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE PROBLEM GOE HAS IN  
DEALING WITH SSHAYKH OF AL-AZHAR AND COPTIC POPE SHENUDA,  
BOTH OF WHOM HE CALLED EXTREMISTS, PM SALIM, MAR'S SAID,  
GETS ALONG WELL WITH SHENUDA AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR "KEEPING  
HIM IN LINE." MAR'S, ON OTHER HAND, GETS ALONG WITH  
SHAYKH OF AL-AZHAF AND IS HIS PRINCIPAL GOVT CONTACT. AMB  
ASKED MAR'S ABOUT 1856 LAW WHICH PROHIBITS BUILDING OF CHURCHES  
IN VICINITY OF MOSQUES (BUT NOT VICE VERSA). MAR'SI SAID  
THIS OTTOMAN LAW IS INDEED STILL ON THE BOOKS AND THERE  
WOULD BE "REAL TROUBLE" IN PEOPLES ASSEMBLY IF GOVT TRIED  
TO HAVE IT REPEALED. INSTEAD, GOE BELIEVES IT IS MORE EFFECTIVE  
TO HANDLE THIS AND OTHER SENSITIVE RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS IN  
"PRACTICAL AND INFORMAL MANNER."  
EILTS

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL STABILITY, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, CIVIL DISORDERS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 77 CAIRO 14256  
**Retention:** 0  
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**Review Content Flags:**  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PINT, SHUM, EG  
**To:** STATE ALEXANDRIA  
**Type:** TE  
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Margaret P. Grafeld  
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